Claims

1. A method for a business to securely distribute document folders to recipients, said method comprising the steps of:

sending an electronic document folder to a network of interconnected computers;

notifying each recipient of electronic document folders intended for said recipient by means of giving said recipient an indirect reference to each electronic document folder intended for said recipient;

selecting a destination location for each recipient to receive the electronic document folders intended for said recipient, using data provided by said recipient; and

accumulating the sent electronic document folders at said destination location.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the data provided by each recipient is from the group comprising document reception address data and additional document reception data.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the document reception address data comprises at least one of path

information and a method for network document folder delivery.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the additional document reception data comprises at least one of receiving device capabilities and document reception location data.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the indirect reference to each document folder comprises a folder code containing information needed to retrieve the document folder.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the folder code is a privacy code.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the folder code is mediacard data, said mediacard data delivered to each recipient prior to said recipient's accessing an electronic document folder.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of modifying the data for best recipient use with regard to capabilities of a receiving device at said destination location.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of a server located on the network of interconnected computers recording an acknowledgement of a delivery of an electronic document folder and making said acknowledgment available to a sender.
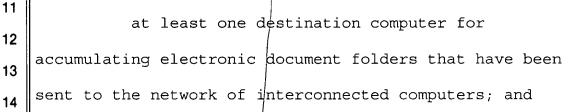
10.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of a recipient retrieving an electronic document folder based upon providing information contained in said indirect reference.

11.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of authenticating at least some documents within the electronic document folders.

12.   The method of claim 11, wherein the authenticating step comprises a seal engine attaching a seal to at least one document within an electronic document folder.

13.   The method of claim 12, wherein the attached seal comprises information contained in the at least one document and information not contained in the at least one document.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the information not contained in the at least one document comprises at least one from the group comprising a date of transmission, a time of transmission, a protocol identification, information known only by an intended recipient, and a file size.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one document within a sent document folder has printable representation.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one document folder comprises exactly one document.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic document folders are sent using virtual private network security.

18. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of charging a recipient upon the recipient's taking delivery of an electronic document folder when the electronic document folder has been sent C.O.D.

19. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of charging a recipient upon the recipient taking delivery of an electronic document folder when the electronic document folder has been stored on the network beyond an agreed-upon period of time.

20. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of a recipient specifying a date of expiration of an electronic document folder temporarily stored on the network.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of notifying each recipient comprises sending a notification via email.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of notifying each recipient comprises sending a notification over a cellular phone.

23.   The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of converting a sent electronic document folder into a page description language before sending a link to the electronic document folder to a recipient.

24.   A system for a business to securely distribute document folders to recipients, said system comprising:

at least one sending device for sending to and temporarily storing electronic document folders on a network of interconnected computers;

at least one destination computer for accumulating electronic document folders that have been sent to the network of interconnected computers; and

coupled to each destination computer, a receiving device for delivering electronic document folders to recipients.

25. The system of claim 24, further comprising a notification device for notifying a recipient of a sent electronic document folder, by means of an indirect reference to the electronic document folder, said notification device from the group comprising a Web-enabled personal computer, a Web-enabled Internet appliance, and a cellular telephone.

26.   The system of claim 24, wherein said network of interconnected computers is from the group comprising the

Internet, an intranet, a wide-area network, and a local area network.

27. The system of claim 24, wherein the at least one sending device is from the group comprising a scanner, a facsimile machine, and a computer.

28. The system of claim 24, wherein the receiving device is from the group comprising a Web-enabled personal computer, a Web-enabled printer, a Web-connected digital copier, and a Web-enabled Internet appliance.

29. The system of claim 24, wherein the at least one destination computer is located at a partnership facility having a pre-established relationship with the business.

30. The system of claim 24, further comprising an administrative subsystem coupled to the network of interconnected computers for managing system resources based on requests of senders and recipients of electronic document folders.

31. The system of claim 30, further comprising a billing subsystem coupled to the administrative subsystem for detecting monetizing events and charging at least one of a sender and a recipient upon the occurrence of a monetizing event.

32. The system of claim 31, further comprising a billing database coupled to the billing subsystem for maintaining and adjusting accounts of senders and recipients based on information received from the billing subsystem.

33. The system of claim 31, wherein a monetizing event is sending an electronic document folder.

34. The system of claim 31, wherein a monetizing event is sending an electronic document folder C.O.D.

35. The system of claim 31, wherein a monetizing event is temporarily storing an electronic document folder on the network beyond an agreed-upon period of time.

36. The system of claim 31, wherein a monetizing event is a recipient requesting that a sent electronic document folder be authenticated.

37. The system of claim 24, further comprising a seal engine coupled to the network of interconnected computers for attaching a seal to at least one document within an electronic document folder.

38. A computer readable medium containing a computer program product for a business to securely distribute document folders to recipients, said computer program product comprising:

program code for causing the sending of electronic document folders to a network of interconnected computers;

program code for notifying a recipient of a sent electronic document folder by means of an indirect reference to the electronic document folder;

program code for selecting a destination computer for an electronic document folder using data provided by a recipient; and

program code for accumulating sent electronic document folders at the destination computer.